

### How to Obtain a Marriage License

All people who marry in Massachusetts must have a marriage license issued in Massachusetts. An out-of-state-license cannot be used. This outlines the procedures you must follow to obtain the license.

#### **How do we apply for a marriage license?**

You must both apply in person for a marriage license. This requirement is applicable to both residents and non-residents of the Commonwealth. According to Massachusetts law, you must jointly file intentions to marry, and you may do so with the city or town clerk in any community of the state. If a person is in the military, intentions may be filed by either party, providing one is a Massachusetts resident. If a person is incarcerated in a county house of correction or a state correctional facility, intentions may be filed by either party. A marriage license is valid for 60 days from the date intentions are filed and may be used in any Massachusetts city or town. It is not valid outside of the state.

#### **Is there a waiting period from the date of application to the date the license is issued?**

Yes, there is a mandatory three-day waiting period. While Sundays and holidays are included in the three days, the day the application is made or not. For example, if you apply on Friday, your license will be issued on or after Monday. Check with your town clerk to determine whether you must pick it up in person, or if it can be mailed.

#### **May we marry before the three days for good reason?**

Yes, if you can obtain a court waiver after filing intentions.

#### **How do we obtain a waiver?**

You should file your intentions first with any city or town clerk. Then an application for a waiver must be filed by both of you at a probate or district court. After a hearing, the court may issue a certificate allowing the marriage license to be issued, and the marriage performed without delay.

#### **What is the cost of a marriage license?**

Payment of cash or check is expected at the time of application for the marriage license.

The cost is \$30.00.

### **At what age may a man or a woman marry?**

A Massachusetts resident may marry if he or she is 18 years of age or older. A birth certificate may be required to show proof of age.

### **What if one or both of us is under 18?**

If either party is under 18, a court order from a probate or district court where the minor resides must be obtained before the marriage intentions can be filed.

### **What if one or both of us has been divorced?**

You are not required to present a divorce certificate when filing intentions to marry. However, it is extremely important that an individual who has been divorced be certain that his/her divorce is absolute. If you are uncertain as to the absolute date of your divorce, you should contact the court where the divorce was granted. In Massachusetts, a divorce does not become absolute until 90 days after the divorce has been granted, regardless of the grounds for divorce.

### **Is there any special requirement for a widow or widower who is remarrying?**

No.

### **Do we need any witnesses present at the ceremony?**

Massachusetts statute does not require that witnesses be present at your ceremony. However, if a member of the clergy performs the ceremony, you should ensure that you are in conformity with the appropriate religious tenets.

### **What are the responsibilities of the member of the clergy or justice of the peace?**

The member of the clergy or justice of the peace must complete and sign the original license and return it to the clerk of the city or town where the license was issued.

### **What should be done if an out-of-state member of the clergy is to perform the**

### marriage?

If an out-of-state member of the clergy is to perform the marriage, the clergy person must obtain a Certificate of Authorization from the Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth prior to the ceremony. This certificate, which is issued by the Public Records Division of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, is to be attached to the original license and returned to the clerk of the city or town where the license was issued. For further information, contact:

Division of Public Records  
Secretary of the Commonwealth  
One Ashburton Place, Room 1719  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 727-2836

### **Where can we go for additional assistance or information?**

You may contact your city or town clerk, or:

Registry of Vital Records and Statistics  
Department of Public Health  
470 Atlantic Ave. - 2nd floor  
Boston, MA 02210-2224  
(617) 753-8600